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Top Secret 219

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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE DAILY CABLE

Saturday 18 February 1978 CG NIDC 78/041C

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NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION

Unauthorized Disclosure Subject to Criminal Sanctions

DIA review(s) completed.

State Dept. review completed

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National Intelligence Daily Cable for Saturday, 18 February 1978.

The NID Cable is for the purpose of informing senior US officials.

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LEBANON-SYRIA: Troop Movement

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[redacted] //The Syrian forces involved are elite units usually stationed in the Damascus area. [redacted]

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[redacted] two brigades of a Syrian armored division are on standby alert for possible deployment to Lebanon.//

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[redacted] We believe the Syrian move is precautionary and that Damascus does not intend to launch a major move against the Maronites at present. Extremist Christians killed several Syrian soldiers in Beirut this week, and the Syrian command probably wants to be prepared for any further attacks. Syrian forces in Beirut are on alert and have consolidated their positions.

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[redacted] The Syrians are edgy, and Foreign Minister Khaddam told the US Embassy in Damascus that further incidents may seriously weaken the discipline of Syrian troops. If the provocations continue, the Syrians may feel compelled to react forcefully to assert their authority. [redacted]

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USSR: Foreign Fishing Quotas

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[redacted] *The promulgation last March of the US 200-mile fishing zone--which set quotas for foreign fishing fleets and tightened enforcement procedures--has sharply reduced Soviet fishing operations in US North Atlantic waters, one of the world's prime fishing grounds.*

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[redacted] The US regulations have drastically reduced the amount of fish the Soviets may harvest. The 1978 Soviet quota in this area for all species is 91,853 tons--down 45 percent from the 1977 quota of 167,900 tons and roughly 50 percent of the average annual Soviet catch in US Atlantic waters in 1974 to 1976. In 1977 the Soviets caught an estimated 104,400 tons of fish--well under the quota--but overfished certain species.

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[redacted] Foreign fishing vessels must report their location to the US Coast Guard while in US waters, record their catches in their log books, and report the catches to US authorities every week.

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[redacted] Regulations strictly limit the levels of by-catches--fish of other species taken while fishing for a designated specie. A country that exceeds a by-catch level is prohibited from further fishing for the specified species, which was not the case in the past. [redacted]

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[redacted] The Soviet catch in January in US waters was abnormally low. Soviet fishing vessels spent less than 10 percent of the ship days and caught less than 2 percent of the fish that they did in January 1977. Normally the Soviets go after mackerel early in the year but, apparently because of the low quotas for mackerel and the fear of excessive by-catches, they caught no mackerel this January. [redacted]

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USSR: Oil Production

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[redacted] According to a high-level Soviet oil official, Soviet crude oil and gas condensate production last year was only 543 million tons, 3 million tons below the official figure published earlier. In a conversation last week with US Embassy and trade officers, the official also stated that anticipated 1978 production will be in the neighborhood of 567 million tons, substantially below the current goal of 575 million tons.

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25X1 [] We do not yet know why the official would quote oil production figures that differ significantly from those published in official Soviet sources. If his figures are accurate, production fell short of last year's target by 7 million tons--the largest amount that an annual oil output target has ever been underfulfilled.

25X1 [] //The Soviet Government has lately been reporting conflicting data for West Siberian oil production and withholding regional oil and gas production data. Such data manipulation is likely to increase as Moscow's economic problems grow.// []

SPAIN: Regional Govt. Formed

25X1 [] *Political parties in the northern Basque region of Spain yesterday formed a regional government that will exercise limited autonomy until a new national constitution spells out the transfer of specific powers from Madrid.*

25X1 [] Under the terms of a "provisional autonomy" statute passed in December, Basque members of the Spanish national parliament selected five representatives from each of the three participating provinces to become the Basque General Council. The fourth Basque province, Navarra, is evenly split over whether to join the region and has postponed a decision until after municipal elections, which may be held later this year.

25X1 [] Reflecting the local results of last summer's legislative elections, the General Council will be made up of five members from the Socialist Workers Party, five from the Basque Nationalist Party, three from Prime Minister Suarez' Union of the Democratic Center, a regional leftist, and an independent.

25X1 [] The Socialists, Spain's major opposition party, won a drawn-out battle for the Council presidency, but strained relations with the Basque Nationalists. Neither party is likely to relish the thought of leaving the Center Democrats in a position to break ties between their evenly matched forces.

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NAMIBIA: Settlement Talks

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[] //South-West Africa People's Organization President Sam Nujoma's announcement on Thursday that SWAPO will accept a small South African residual force in Namibia simply made public the group's earlier agreement to this condition and has not resolved the impasse in the Namibia settlement talks. Although South African Foreign Minister Botha left New York, the SWAPO leaders have remained for further talks with the five-nation Western contact group. South African spokesmen meanwhile have indicated that Pretoria will not go ahead with its unilateral program for Namibia until further clarifications of the Western plan are received and consultations can be held with Namibian leaders inside the territory.//

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[] //When SWAPO leaders met with the five Western foreign ministers last weekend, they accepted the Western proposal that a force of no more than 1,500 South African soldiers remain in Namibia during a preindependence election. The SWAPO leaders demanded, however, that the force be confined to one base near the South African border, and they reasserted this demand to the contact group on Thursday. According to the Western plan, the residual force is to be confined to no more than two bases in northern Namibia.//

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[] //On Thursday the SWAPO leaders also demanded that a minimum strength for the proposed UN military force be stated explicitly in the settlement package, and they recommended at least 5,000 UN troops in addition to 1,000 civilian observers.//

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[] //When Foreign Minister Botha met with the Western foreign ministers last Saturday, he insisted that Pretoria would accept no more than 2,000 UN troops, on the condition that 1,000 be located north of the Namibian border. SWAPO, however, has refused to allow any UN monitoring of its forces in Angola or Zambia.//

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[] //The status of Walvis Bay, the only deepwater harbor along the Namibian coast, also remains a major obstacle to a settlement agreement. Last weekend the Western foreign ministers advocated that the conflicting claims to its possession be left until an independent Namibian Government is established, but Nujoma asserted that SWAPO will not agree to a cease-fire unless Pretoria renounces sovereignty over Walvis

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Bay and withdraws all troops from the exclave. The South Africans, however, insist that their possession of Walvis Bay is not negotiable, and that the troops stationed there are not to be included in the residual force.//

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[REDACTED] //After Botha returned home and attended a meeting of the South African cabinet, he told the press that he will visit Namibia to inform the Administrator General and some Namibian leaders on developments in New York. Prime Minister Vorster announced that the government will not make a final decision on Namibia until the "interested parties" inside the territory are consulted and the South African Parliament has an opportunity to debate the matter.//

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[REDACTED] //Such statements very likely are intended primarily to allow some time for further negotiations with the Western contact group before Pretoria announces a definite schedule for holding preindependence elections with or without a truce with SWAPO and UN participation in the transition process. Botha has not said which Namibian leaders he will consult or how long the process will continue. He is likely to pay most attention to the white settlers and the tribal leaders who favor maintaining an effective South African military presence and oppose concessions to SWAPO. [REDACTED]

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